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POTENTIAL ADDITIONAL ITEM OF DISCUSSION: DEMONSTRATIONS IN OTTAWA

For over a week, protests against government mandates for COVID-19 vaccines and masks, as well as restrictions on certain businesses, have been underway in the streets surrounding Parliament Hill. While you participated in a discussion on this topic at the Cabinet Committee on Safety, Security and Emergencies Committee on February 6th, this issue may be raised during this meeting as developments continue to occur across the country.

On February 6th, Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson declared a state of emergency, which gives the city additional powers around procurement and how it delivers services. This could help facilitate the purchase of equipment required by frontline workers and first responders. On February 7th, city councilors discussed the impact of the truck convoy on the city's residents and businesses. Mayor Jim Watson has also called on the Prime Minister to appoint a mediator in an effort to end the occupation, which he describes as "a complete standoff". After announcing that individuals providing fuel or other "material supports" to protesters could be subject to arrest, the Ottawa police has reported arrests. Fuel was also seized by police at the convoy's Coventry Road staging area.

Over the weekend, similar protests were also seen in other major cities across Canada. In Toronto, police controlled and later ended a much smaller protest by setting up roadblocks and preventing any vehicles from approaching the provincial legislature. In Quebec City, several thousand demonstrators gathered outside Quebec's National Assembly. In Edmonton, between 1,000 and 2,000 people gathered on the Alberta Legislature Grounds. Many of the demonstrators were arriving from a blockade at a border crossing in Coutts, Alberta, which disrupted traffic in all directions. Finally, a series of protests also occurred in British Columbia, where protesters were met with counter-protesters impeding the convoy's movement and occupation of city centres.

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